**Board Meeting Reports**

**December 7, 2021**

# Director's Report – Emily Wharton

On October 13th, we were visited by Casandra Hall, a consultant hired to report to the Governor on the re-alignment of the state's workforce programs. We had a great discussion about the many services that IDB offers and she had the opportunity to see our youth library. Kathy gave an excellent overview of the BEP and shared a lively and enthusiastic vision for its potential.

On October 28th, Sarah Willeford and I met with governor Reynolds to discuss our appropriations request and various issues related to services to blind Iowans. The governor listened attentively to our request and was very interested in the work of the department. She stated that combining IDB with other agencies is not even on the table. We invited the governor to our STEMfest, held in partnership with the Governor's STEM Council, after our annual Braille Challenge on February 26, 2022.

On November 15th, we met virtually with our RSA monitoring team to discuss our quarterly data dashboards. They stated that our monitoring report is currently with their management and that is at the end of a long line. I don't anticipate receiving a draft for comment until after the first of the year. We started working on resolving issues that they raised verbally in July and hope to have all of the issues resolved to the best of our ability before the report is issued.

We have run into delays with the railing for our new ramp but, as of this writing, we hope to have it in place and the north entrance re-opened in early December.

The center staff and students met to come up with a list of the top three names for the center. These names were then put forth in a survey to all interested parties. This survey closed on November 14th and a copy of the results has been provided to the commission board for their consideration.   
  
CFO – Cheri Myers

## Federal Grant Update:

The Grant Report as of 10/31/2021 is enclosed. The preliminary FFY22 grant award notices have been received but not the full awards. This is typical as we can receive the grants in increments.

## Budget Report:

Enclosed is the budget report on State FY22 through 10/31/2021. The report included report compares year to date to the annual budget based on state fiscal year. I added a brief explanation in column F on any item that appeared to be over budget to date.

IDB ended the fiscal year with a small reversion of $2,092.08. These reverted funds have been used to cover FY21 invoices that were received after fiscal year end.

## Gifts and Bequests

The Gifts and Bequests report is located at the bottom of the FY22 Budget report.

## WorkDay Conversion:

The state conversion to WorkDay is progressing. All staff have been submitting their timesheets and expense reimbursements in WorkDay since 9/17/2021. Grants management, Procurement, Budget and Financial Accounting are planned to be converted in September 2022. December 6, 2021 to December 17, 2021 the accounting staff and I will be in half day sessions for the conversion.

## Other:

* The FY20 audit has been completed and I am currently writing a response. The FY21 audit has already begun.
* The final NRLI seminar that I was to attend has again been delayed due to COVID concerns.
* We are currently hiring a part-time Accounting Clerk 2.

# Education and Training Team – Helen Stevens

## Personnel

* Vanasha Washington began work as a Youth Services Worker effective September 13. Vanasha’s prior experience includes one summer working with blind youth.
* Sarah Elmore accepted the position of Vocational Rehabilitation Teacher effective October 25th. Sarah has degrees in Art Education and Instructional Design and Technology, and has experience teaching both youth and adults.
* Leland Smith accepted a position with the Iowa Library for the Blind effective November 27. We have submitted the paperwork to post the position of YATP travel instructor, and will hopefully be accepting applications by the time of the Commission meeting.
* We are also waiting on DAS to repost our vacant Vocational Rehabilitation Teacher position, as well as post the openings for our 2022 summer program staff.
* We are still interviewing for our open Rehabilitation Technology Specialist position.

## Pre-Employment Transition Services

* Eight youth participated in the September youth weekend retreat.
* Nine youth participated in the October weekend retreat. Activities included picking and carving pumpkins, science experiments and several cooking activities.
* The December retreat is scheduled for December 10-12. Activities and skills covered include ice skating, internet research, meal etiquette, several other spatial awareness and orientation and mobility activities, and attending the NFBI Des Moines Chapter Christmas party.
* The January retreat has a technology theme, the February retreat includes the Braille Challenge and an activity with ICUB, and the April retreat has an outdoor theme that will include zip lining.
* Our attendance is still significantly lower than it was prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the students who attended retreats prior to the spring of 2020 are too old now or have lost touch with IDB youth programming. Only two new students have attended retreats thus far this year.
* Education and Training Team members and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are working hard to connect with new students and encourage them to participate. We appreciate assistance connecting with more youth, in particular in the 14-16 age range.

## Young Adult Transition Program

While there are no major updates, students continue to make progress on their individual goals, and we continue to recruit new students for the 2022-2023 school year.

## Client Training

* Approximately 100 clients are currently receiving services from a Rehabilitation Technology Specialist.
* Approximately 160 clients are currently receiving services from a Vocational Rehabilitation Teacher.
* Vocational Rehabilitation Teachers and Rehabilitation Technology Specialists continue to meet with clients in-person or remotely based on which method best fits the training needs of the client.
* Nine clients participated in the October self-week session. We continue to receive positive feedback from clients about the benefits of attending, and continue to work with participants on attending the Orientation Center whenever possible.
* Applications are still being accepted for the March and May sessions.
* Approximate total number of direct services recorded as provided to clients by VR Teachers, Rehabilitation Technology Specialists, YATP or LEAP staff members so far during program year 2021, which began July 1, 2021: 1,400. These services include: Disability Related Skills Training, Job Readiness Training, Rehabilitation Technology, Pre-ETS Job Exploration and Counseling, Pre-ETS Work Based Learning Experiences, Pre-ETS Counseling on PSE Enrollment Opportunities, Pre-ETS Workplace Readiness Training, and Pre-ETS Instruction in Self-Advocacy.
* Program year 2020: 3,000
* Program year 2019: 3,100
* Program year 2018: 1,600
* As anticipated, we recorded providing more services during the first quarter of PY21 than in any previous quarter. We anticipate that more services will be recorded in each remaining quarter of PY21 than during that same quarter in any previous year.

# Independent Living Program - Kimberley Barber

## Alma Pedretti Charitable Foundation Grant Application

On Monday, October 18, 2021, in collaboration with the University of Iowa Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) and Independent Living (IL) teacher Susan Howard, we applied for a Hilker-Pedretti Charitable Foundation grant with focus on a new pilot project to be administered under our Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) IL program. Emphasis was placed on assistive technology education and training of active IL clients living in either Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Story, and/or Polk county areas and IL teachers. The grant request was made for $39,826.94. A call was received from one Hilker-Pedretti foundation Board member expressing great interest in our project and also asking questions about the project. The Board member commented that their foundation typically only awards up to $15,000.00 per project. We discussed some of the logistics and she planned to take the information back to her full Board for additional conversations. All grant awards will be made on December 10, 2021.

## Older Individuals who are Blind Technical Assistance Center (OIB-TAC)

IDB was awarded Intensive Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) for Older Individuals who are Blind programs from the OIB-TAC starting January 3, 2022. These services are available to designated state agencies at no charge. In addition, these grants are come from the Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA) to the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University.

All technical assistance is individualized, and goals are set by the designated state agency in collaboration with the IL OIB-TAC service staff. Available T&TA services focus on four topic areas:

1. Community outreach methods and strategies to identify potential recipients of services.
2. Promising practices based on “promising evidence” as defined in (34 CFR 77.1), including the development and dissemination of relevant materials to facilitate the delivery of high-quality services.
3. Program performance, including data reporting and analysis.
4. Financial and management practices, including practices to ensure compliance with grant administration requirements.

In addition, our time requirements will include:

1. About five days attending meetings and training during two in-person site visits or in virtual events.
2. Four to six, on-hour conference calls before TA site visits (approx. 1 per week) to gather relevant info about the agency, needs, and goals.
3. Three one-hour conference calls to be held between TA site visit and training events to discuss progress and provide follow-along TA based on goals set.
4. Follow-along monthly conference calls held until intensive TA is completed or approximately 12 months of following completion of intensive T&TA.
5. Completion of an agency intensive self-assessment, which will include input from multiple team members in administration, fiscal management, personnel, and service delivery.
6. Completion of an OIB-TAC facilitated SWOT analysis.
7. Access to local stake-holder, including referring organizations and potential referral sources, consumers, and direct service staff for focus groups.
8. Completion of quarterly goal reports for one year.

## Iowa Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), Executive Director (ED) Retirement

In November, Dawn Francis, Executive Director (ED) of Iowa Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) announced she would retire the end of business on December 31, 2021. Dawn started as ED of SILC in March of 2006. She shared she truly appreciated all the wonderful disability right advocates in Iowa as well as nationally and was honored to serve with us in advocating for an inclusive and accessible world for people with disabilities. Dawn reported her next journey in retirement, while not working in Independent Living, will be to travel and continue to serve her community in other ways.

The SILC Executive Committee, Vienna Hoang of Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services and I have been part of the SILC’s succession planning committee meeting. Their first meeting was held on Friday, November 19th with plans solidifying the new ED’s job description among other business protocols. Additional meetings are anticipated as this committee moves forward.

## Independent Living Brochures

Kelsi Hansen, Susan Howard, Sandy Ryan and I have been working on IL brochure concepts for our program. One brochure is designed to address that needs specific to potential applicants and families and the other will be designed to target professionals. We hope to finalize this project soon.

## IL Staff Updates

* The IL program recently reposted the Secretary 1 position. Once posted, we will allow a 14-day window for applicants to apply then we will start the interview process.
* Deanna Horn, a temporary with Omnia Partners was hired and is being trained to help in the IL office. Deanna is a former retired State employee with the Iowa Insurance Commission out of their Investigations Division so she is no stranger to working within state government.
* Finally, our program has been very fortunate to have SCSEP-AARP, Linda Young, working within our IL program for some time now. Linda has been a tremendous help to our program. I am very thankful for all of her assistance. Linda’s last day with our program will be Tuesday, November 23rd as she will be retiring. She hopes that perhaps after the first of the year she may be able to return to volunteer on occasion.
* A new SCSEP-AARP referral near the end of November.

## Delta Gamma Volunteer

In the very near future, Abigail Winkelbauer, Drake University Delta Gamma, will be working with our IL program on a fundraiser. She and her sorority is looking forward to building a partnership with our program. More information will be forthcoming as we move forward in working with them and this new project.

# **Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped Report and Statistics – Sarah Willeford**

## Library Updates

The Library continues to partner with the Governor’s STEM Council by providing input on future and current activities for their STEM Scale-Up Grants for this year and next year. The scale-up activities will be made accessible, available for check out and will be used in our youth programming we do throughout the year. We also are providing input so future Scale-Up activities are accessible from the start.

The Instructional Materials Center created and launched a new student material order form to help streamline orders and ensure staff has the information they need to produce student materials. Both videos and online resources where created to assist in the use of the new order form. The IMC staff continues to promote and grow the Quick Braille program which offers quick turnaround braille for orders that are needed in 2 weeks or less. It also provides a loaner program for students who would benefit from having access to a braille embosser and braille eReader for their materials.

The Library expanded its partnership with State Library of Iowa to provide both monthly online trainings and a Braille Bits program to public librarians. The Braille Bits for Librarians program is an online course based off of the Library’s Braille Bits program that provides librarians with an introductory course to braille. The Library hosted a Preconference on October 6, 2021 for the Iowa Library Association Conference. 20 librarians spent the day at IDB learning about library and Department services, accessibility and assistive technology.

The Library is partnering with communities and their libraries to provide accessible Story Walks or Story Trails. Story Walks/Story Trails are very popular and a great way to get people walking while reading children’s books. Pages of a book are made into signs and placed along walking trails and paths for people to follow as they walk and read the book. We have worked to develop different ways to make these accessible. Our Audio Team is producing audio versions for the stories which are being added to our library collection and BARD. Patrons can access the audio which has added prompts so readers know when to stop and start the audio book as they walk and read. Our Braille Production Team has developed several options as way to include braille with the stories depending on how the community or library has set up their signs with the text of the book. The list of accessible stories will be made available to the public libraries on our library blog.

The Library completed and officially opened the new Youth Library Space. It features books, braille activities, accessible Story Walk, our Ioponics (Aquaponics) system and great places to curl up with a good book. Also, off of the Youth Library Space is our new Makerspace which features STEM activities, crafts, CodeJumper and more.

## Fall and Winter Programs

The Library will be hosting several programs this fall and winter for patrons of all ages.

* The Great Reading Challenge (GRC) is a six month long reading challenge open to adults 18 years of age or older who are a patron of the Iowa Library for the Blind and Print Disabled. To complete the challenge, you need to read 12 books between January 15, 2022 and July 15, 2022. The challenge of the GRC is to read books that fit into one of the many categories on the Mission page in ReadSquared.
* Makerspace Mondays are being held on the second Monday of the month. It is offered both in-person at IDB or families can register to receive an activity kit and link to the activity video sent to them. Over 18 families are currently participating in the program.
* Story Time and Crafts with Denise is held on Friday either virtually at 10:00 am or in-person at 3:30 pm.
* Our Braille Babies and Books for Kids programs continue year round. We have over 150 actively participating in our Books for Kids program which each month sends books to homes and schools to promote reading and braille.

## Library Staff Updates

* Jodi Aldini has filled the Access Service Librarian position and Leland Smith has transferred to our IMC Service Specialist position.

## Online and Social Media

Library Blogs

* Turning the Pages Library Blog. Find information on library services, programs and resources. <http://iowalibrary.blog>
* Instructional Materials Center Blog. For educators and transcribers. Information on accessible educational materials, braille transcription, universal design and more. <http://idbimclibrary.blog>

Podcasts

* Library News. A monthly podcast by library staff about upcoming library events, programs, latest books and more.
* Library Chat. A monthly podcast by library staff where we review books and podcasts on all types of subjects.
* Braille Bits. A podcast reviewing each Braille Bits lesson and a discussion with a special guest about braille.

Social Media

Follow Twitter, like us on Facebook and check out the great resources on the IDB YouTube channel

## Library Statistics

For September 2021 and October 2021

Library Patrons Added: 106

Library Material Circulation

Total Circulation: 62,320

Braille: 803

Large Print: 206

Digital Books: 59,456

Magazine Issues: 1,663

Digital Players: 131

Library Collection

Total Books Added to the Library Collection: 1,534

Braille: 99

Print/Braille: 37

Large Print: 94

Digital Books: 1,304

Instructional Materials Center Orders Received

Total Orders Received: 334

BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download) Usage

Total Books Downloaded from BARD: 8,825

Audio: 7,837

Braille: 988

Average Number of Patrons Using BARD: 576

Newsline Service Usage

Current Subscribers: 1,726

New Subscribers: 5

Telephone Calls: 4,967

Web Sessions: 11,624

“In Your Pocket” Deliveries: 17,547

E-mail Deliveries: 4,710

Iowa Newspaper Accesses: 50,688

National Newspaper Accesses: 3,229

International Newspaper Accesses: 382

Blog Usage

Library – Turning the Pages Blog

Visitors: 384

Views: 983

Instructional Materials Center Blog

Visitors: 274

Views: 755

Library Podcasts

Library News Monthly Podcast: 2 produced

Listens Online: 253

Sent Out on Cartridges: 1,273

Library Chat Podcast: 2 produced

Listens Online: 179

Braille Bits Podcast:

Listens Online: 513

# Orientation Center Report – Karly Prinds

## Orientation Center Students

Currently the center has five students, and a 6th one will arrive on November 30th. We also have four staff in training as well at this time. We are expecting new students in the months of January and February, and are continuing to grow, build, and move the center forward.

The week of October 18th was a busy one. We changed to a 4-block class schedule, and moved business class from 4:10 pm each day to 11:30 am. Home Management and Shop class are the two classes that students finish first, so they are alternating, which seems to be working out well. Also, that week, we unveiled our triangle on October 19th.  The three sides represent skills, attitude, and confidence, and each time our students complete a milestone such as finishing the braille code, a drop off, completing a small or large meal, a project in shop class, etc., they will clang the triangle and we will hear it throughout the building and together, cheering them on, we will celebrate these important milestones throughout their center training.

Nami Wallace transferred into her new role as the Home Management instructor on October 29th.  Nami was previously our Generalist, so we are hoping we can get the posting out as soon as the updated PDQ has been approved.

We had a student graduate on October 27th, and look forward to her future plans. She has started an LLC, and will be an Education Consultant in Science Education / STEM areas. She would like to Advocate for underrepresented populations, people with disabilities, women, and women of color, in relation to recruitment to and completion of STEM 2-year and 4-year programs.

We have been getting outside for some fresh air and confidence building. In September, we went to the apple orchard, and in October, students and staff went seed harvesting. As the holidays are upon us, we had our Thanksgiving meal on November 17th, and were happy to be joined by the YATP students and staff. The following week, we went holiday tree cutting as well on November 22nd. Our holiday meal is coming up and center staff are excited to cook for our students, since the students cooked for staff during our Thanksgiving meal.

# BEP – Kathy Roat

## Business Growth

BEP Vendors, experienced continued supply shortages, minimal staffing in many buildings and a pick-up in rest area traffic to 100% of pre-COVID-19 pandemic by October 2021, modified by one rest area under construction. Nevertheless, vendors continue to get new machines, and several have stepped up their game in signage and consistent stocking. Sales reflect this. Sales FFY 2021 Quarter 4 were up to 91% of 2019 compared to Sales FFY 2020 Quarter 4 at 65% of 2019. Net income FFY 2021 Quarter 4 were up to 98% of 2019 compared to Net Income FFY 2020 Quarter 4 at 59% of 2019.

Two IDB vendors have opened micro markets this quarter. Des Moines City Hall opened in late September. It has been a steep learning curve for the vendor who has risen to the challenge of learning the technology involved as well as the dedicated BEP Counselors learning and encouraging along with the vendor. Another vendor experienced in micro markets has assumed the Neal Smith building to open its micro market – the first for the federal region. The BEP team has utilized what we have learned about working with federal buildings and opening three sizes of markets to draft a six-months-out planning tool to smooth implementation of future markets.

## FRRP

IDB met the September 30, 2021 goal of distributing Financial Relief and Restoration Payments (FRRP) of $203,966: After lower than expected administrative costs, 98.61% of the total directly addressed vendor losses: two at 100%, six at 85% or more, five at 80% or more. Three vendors had increases rather than losses in net profits and were ineligible.

## Operating Agreement Approval and other documents

IDB received RSA approval in October of the IDB ECBV approved December 2020 Operating Agreement.

The new Operating Agreement better protects vendors by requiring business auto insurance, has IDB picking up expenses beyond $500 per incident of repairs to equipment, and adds the term “Grievance” to a section header to make clearest that opportunity when needed.

It also makes clear that vendors are part of an organization and the Elected Committee of Blind Vendors (ECBV) have the authority together with IDB, when approved by RSA, to make changes to the Operating Agreement that affect all. One vendor has decided to not sign the Operating Agreement and has resigned his facility (route of 16 sites). Director Wharton, with support from the ECBV, has assigned an experienced vendor temporarily to this facility. This vendor will add credit cards to the route which will provide sales data when the facility goes out to bid in March.

Iowa Administrative Code 111 updates have been on the back burner due to other priorities.

## Recruiting and Training, Professional Development

Two individuals have expressed interest in BEP and the pilot screening tool proved useful to BEP Counselors who were able to identify skills the applicant needs to become a trainee. The Training Subcommittee has shifted to prepare next steps for these candidates: updating pre-training screenings once candidates are accepted, and researching outsource and in-house curriculum options with a focus goal to get the first three weeks of training ready for likely trainees.

National Association of Blind Merchants consultant Terry Smith met with the ECBV, BEP staff and additional vendors the day before the October Statewide Meeting to update the strategic plan. Finishing touches are needed, but the thrust is that the Iowa BEP seeks to be on the cutting edge of the industry, and to be known for quality to be able to be competitive.

The Statewide Meeting upward mobility sessions inspired vendors to increase prices to market levels, add credit card fees and tune into telemetry. The inspiration came from Rehabilitation Technology Specialist Amena Thomas demonstrating use of technology, BEP staff facilitating idea sharing in key areas of business, and the afternoon session on making the most of card reader data. Highlights include an experienced and tech savvy vendor sharing how he uses data to manage business well, and an increase in vendors sharing best practices, a key to moving toward strategic goals.

# Vocational Rehabilitation – Keri Osterhaus

## VR Position Vacancies and Changes

* Travis Robinson is now serving clients living in Southeastern Iowa. We are in the hiring process for the counties he was serving in East Central Iowa.
* Julie Aufdenkamp resigned her position as VR counselor. We are planning to replace the counselor position once we have the required approvals to do this.
* Lisa Ortner will be assigned all clients who are currently in the Orientation Center. She will be focusing with students on career readiness, job search, accessing work-based learning experiences and assisting students to refine their employment plans.
* Darci Clark resigned her position as support staff to the VR program. We are in the hiring process to replace her position.

## Vocational Rehabilitation Activities

**Client Outcomes:** Since the start of the program year, counselors successfully closed five VR cases in employment. Positions included dental assistant, head cook, preschool teacher and social worker. The average hourly wage for these individuals was $17.91 per hour with an average of 34.50 hours per week. There are currently 28 individuals in employment and counselors are working with them to ensure success in their positions.

**Business Services:** We continue to provide services to employers across the state. Since the last report, services have been provided to Wells Fargo, Accura Healthcare, Eiler Place and Kreamer Law Firm. Services were in the areas of consultation, education, recruitment, and retention services. IDB is reviewing current services to business and plan to offer training to IowaWORKS Business Services Representatives to ensure IDB services are known and offered to Iowa Businesses.

**Training:** VR counselors participated in trainings related to Deafblind services; VR counselors have recognized that there are significant gaps in services to Deafblind Iowans and we are exploring ways to increase and improve these services. In addition, VR counselors have participated in trainings related to case management and pre-employment transition services. VR counselors are exploring additional curriculums to use in engaging high school age students who are blind or have low vision.

**Partner Engagement:** IDB is reviewing its current MOU with IVRS to ensure that students who are blind or have low vision are referred to IDB for services. In ensuring students are referred to our programs we will be better able to assist them, their family and their teams in making decisions regarding their futures. IDB is also partnering with IVRS, the Department of Education, the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE) and other stakeholders to explore equity in career and technical education (CTE) programs. One of the goals of this work is to identify ways to increase access to CTE programs for students with disabilities. Finally, IDB is partnering with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS), Iowa Workforce Development and the Department of Education Adult Education and Literacy Program to review local workforce plans within our workforce regions.